

To: Federal Communications Commission
February 2006

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From: SJPAT (San Juan Public Access television)

Regarding: Public Comment for the FCC Notice of Public Rulemaking on 'Video Franchises' (05-311)

As president of SJPAT, a non-profit organization which manages public access television in Friday Harbor, WA, I am writing to urge the FCC require that telephone companies, like cable companies be required to negotiate local/regional franchises in the cities and counties where they intend to offer video services.

Thanks to the FCC's historic far-sighted wisdom in requiring the availability of locally-managed public media-outlets, community-based public, educational, and government access channels are alive and well in the San Juan Islands, WA state. Regular programming includes (1) performances of local artists and musicians, (2) coverage of grass-roots social, religious and political activism, (3) independent/investigative local/national/international news-reporting, and (4) weekly coverage of city and government proceedings. There is no other public broadcasting in this archipelago that bring local-content to our cable television viewers. There is no other public broadcasting here that enables our citizens to get involved with video and broadcasting. Instead of the endless barrage of corporate advertising in the main-stream media that have little or nothing to do with the every-day lives of our community members, our local channels celebrate the men, women and children who live and die here! These channels' recognized-presence and support are fundamentally based on the existence and continuation of franchise agreements between our city/county governments and the local cable operators on San Juan and soon-to-be Orcas Islands (given current county-level negotiations).

In this time of unprecedented media consolidation, I strongly urge the FCC to remember the Federal Communications Act of 1934 that mandated the airwaves belong to the people and that in a democratic society it is necessary to multiply public participation in political discussion. Public media-outlets and the local communities that manage them promote such participatory democracy! The key to establishing and growing community-based broadcasting is the maintenance and continuation of video franchises. It is essential that the FCC look beyond the bottom-line profit motives of telephone companies and vote that they, too, must enter into local/regional video franchises and thereby meet contractual agreements to give-back to the communities they intend to profit from through their use of the public-right-of-way.

Vote to require that telephone companies abide by city and county video franchises when offering video services to them!

Respectfully,

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